



# The Victoria Rhododendron Society

## Newsletter

Box 5562 Postal Station B, Victoria BC Canada V8R 6S4

April 2016

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Thirty-Sixth Year of Publication

<http://victoriarhodo.ca>

Doors Open 7:00

MEETING 7:30

**MONDAY, April 11, 2016**

GARTH HOMER CENTRE

813 DARWIN AVENUE, VICTORIA, B. C.

Speaker: **Gordon MacKay**

**Gordon MacKay** - "The Two Georges: Plant Introductions of George Forrest & George Sheriff"  
Gordon McKay of Cowichan's Alba Plants will be giving a talk on plant hunters, Forrest and Sherriff. Gordon is involved with Victoria's plant community, like VIRAGS (Vancouver Island Rock and Alpine Society). His nursery propagates all its plants, testing new and interesting plants, some not new to horticulture but may have become difficult to find.

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### REFRESHMENTS

for the next meeting to be provided by:

Ian & Daphne Izard

Mary Jackson

Sandy Joinson

Sharon Joseph

Siggi & Marie  
Kemmler

Elaine Kitchen

Please email **Betty Gordon** at

[bbgordon@shaw.ca](mailto:bbgordon@shaw.ca) or (250.479.0210) if

you are coming with your wrapped goodies/snacks. Coffee and tea are supplied. Assistance in setting out the food, milk and sugar, napkins and helping Betty in the kitchen cleanup is really appreciated.

### Editor's Notes

**Review of Peter de Greeff's talk on managing rainwater**

by Theresa McMillan

Paul de Greeff has helped create many rain gardens in Victoria. These gardens help protect urban infrastructures and cut down on pollution. Storm drains and sewers, as well as flooding in lakes and streams, are controlled.

The old idea of using river rock to form pond or stream patterns has proven to be ineffective. In our heavy winter rains, water streams through them, and in the summer they are dry.

## VICTORIA RHODODENDRON SOCIETY BOARD

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Newer rain gardens take into consideration concave surfaces, water input, living plants and soil and drainage. When these are balanced, the garden stays moist all year, and water flowing through it is clear.

The rain from our roof tops can be collected in cisterns from separate sources and carefully drained throughout the year to keep rain gardens (on a suitable base, not clay!) in good condition.

Peter plans to plant some rhododendrons that he got from our March meeting in his rain garden and see how they do.

*(For a list of the water gardens, see page 8)*



## Problem Canadian Maidenheads, Part 2

by Joe Harvey

In Part 1 I explained some of the history of the birdsfoot Adiantums, mentioning that the names were in a state of chaos. We have nurseries offering the same plants with different names, and different plants with the same name.

Flora North America is a scheme to publish an authoritarian account of the North American flora using the naming rules set out in the International Code of Botanical Nomenclature. FNA has come out slowly over some 30 years in multiple volumes (including a small contribution from me) and is still not complete. But the fern volume is out.

FNA accounts are incomprehensible unless you have the necessary scientific vocabulary. Their value is that they cut through centuries of accumulated publications and thus provide the base

*(Continued on page 4)*

# THE VRS RHODODENDRON FLOWER SHOW EXTRAVAGANZA 2016

## Mary Winspear Centre Show

We are having a somewhat different format this year for our truss (rhodo flower) shows. As the costs keep rising for churches and malls, we are taking advantage of free space at the Mary Winspear Center for our public showing of trusses. This will happen on Friday, May 6 to Sunday, May 8. A committee has been organized for setting up and dismantling the truss show. The responsibility of our club members is to bring their trusses (as many as you like) to the Center on Friday, May 6 from 3 to 7 pm. Beautiful new and colorful vases will be already filled with water and members can choose which vases in which to display their trusses. There are several events scheduled at the center on the Mother's Day weekend, and we believe this is a good alternative to the mall displays. We hope to have a good number of trusses on display as this event satisfies the goal of the ARS, "...to promote and educate about the genus rhododendron....".

## Members' Show...A Four T's Evening...Trusses, Tallies, Tea, Timbits

A second part of this extravaganza is at our regular May meeting on Monday, May 9. There will be several categories from previous years into which members can enter their trusses. Each category will have a separate table. There will be members there to help some who do not know which category to enter their truss. Members will be able to choose their prepared vase filled with water in which to enter their trusses. Once all entries have been placed, the members of our club will be asked to vote on which truss they believe is best suited in each category. The winners for each category will be able to take home their trophy and their trusses.

Each member or guest will receive a bag with the correct number of beads for each category. As well, two separate and distinct beads for People's Choice and Best in Show are included.

Members may bring up to 3 trusses per category (see the bottom of page 8 for list of categories). Trophies will be awarded to the members whose truss receives the most number of votes.

After you have finished voting, please enjoy a social evening with friends while partaking of a Canadian tradition...Tim Horton's Timbits.



(Continued from page 2)

from which more popular articles can be written.

Remarkably the birdsfoot maidenhairs have been whittled down to three species. This is good in one way, but bad in others. The names of the three species were coined at widely separated intervals: 1753, 1845 and 1991. Here they are; I will add a few comments.

### **Adiantum pedatum Linnaeus 1753**

This was the first species in the group to be named. As I previously explained this had the confusing result that this name was used as the group name, in what is termed *sensu lato* – the broad sense.

Now its use is restricted to the narrow sense – *sensu stricto*, that is the name *pedatum* is now



**Adiantum pedatum**

confined to the specimen sent to Linnaeus from Virginia (names are attached to a 'type' specimen) and those plants which in all the picky technical details possess the same characteristics.

In this narrow sense *A. pedatum* is the tall woodland plant found in eastern USA and Canada. It does not occur naturally in British Columbia.

### **Adiantum aleuticum Ruprecht 1845**

Ruprecht was on Unalaska Island, Alaska collecting for the flora of Russia and came across this fern. At the time Alaska was part of Russia. Secretary of State William Henry Seward did not negotiate the \$7,200,000 purchase until 1872 and got severely criticised by the Republicans for wasting taxpayers' money on a useless, rocky wasteland. It

was called Seward's Folly.

*A. aleuticum al-U-ti-cum* is the common maidenhair in British Columbia. There are also records from eastern Canada. I should now detail the



**Adiantum aleuticum**

differences between *pedatum* and *aleuticum* –but that would be cruel as they are difficult to observe.

Go to the plant, stand over it, feet apart, look down; where the stipe on *aleuticum* branches, the divisions spread out more or less horizontally in a flat plane to display the leaflets on a level, like a parasol.

In *pedatum* the branches come upwards at an angle giving an almost cone-shaped display of the leaflets, like an umbrella that the wind has blown inside out.

### **Adiantum viridimontanum Paris 1991**

Ultramafic rocks are those with a very low calcium content but high magnesium. When they crop out at the surface the soils they form provide a very difficult medium for plants. They are usually treeless. Plants require calcium which sticks their cells together, and just a smidgeon of magnesium at the centre of each chlorophyll molecule. Ultramafics provide the opposite balance to what is required, and in addition have traces of toxic metals such as chromium, nickel and copper.

Botanists love ultramafic soils. There is always something interesting growing on them. Cathe-

rine Paris had been investigating the serpentine (an ultramafic) exposures in Vermont and studying the dwarf *Adiantum* growing on them. With a



**Adiantum viridimontanum**

By Choess - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=16322611>

colleague this fern was shown to be a stabilised hybrid between *pedatum* and *aleuticum* and to have double their chromosome number (an allotetraploid).

This newly defined species also occurs on serpentine on the Gaspé in Quebec and is reported to be spreading over the asbestos mine spoil at Thetford Mines.

The name *viridimontanum*, *vi-ri-di-mon-TA-num*, translates 'green mountain'. Now with my vast geographical knowledge I happen to know that Vermont is called Green Mountain State, and that the word Vermont itself translates 'green mountain'. Coincidence? I don't think so!

That is the complete story. But what about our Vancouver Island miniature gem, *subpumilum*, *sub-POO-mil-um*? The name translates 'less than dwarf'. Originally described from plants on the Brooks Peninsula, Hans Roemer tells me he has seen it on coastal exposures elsewhere on the west coast. It is a biological entity, propagates true from spores, but is not thought worthy to be described at the species level. A count of its chromosome number shows that it is a diploid, just like the *aleuticum* from which it is probably descended. So it is not a western form of *viridimontanum*, which is small, makes a nice garden plant, but is not as compact as *subpumilum*. Like Rodney Dangerfield, "we don't get no respect".

*Subpumilum* can be recognised from its dwarf, compact growth, particularly in the leaflets overlapping each other (imbricate). But the continent



**Adiantum (pedatum) subpumilum**

has other dwarf, but not so small, plants on exposed rocks both in the east and west. While on a trip on schooner Maple Leaf we were navigating round the ABC islands in the Alaska Panhandle and landed on Coronation Island. This is a limestone outcrop. At the base of an overhang I came across a small maidenhair. My heart started thumping. I had found *subpumilum* in a new location! Alas no, it is a lovely dwarf, grows to about 15cm, has grown in a pot on my doorstep for about 10 years and is presumably just an ecotype of *aleuticum*. Its leaflets are not imbricate. I started calling it *calderi* from a dwarf described from the east, anyone with one should scrub the *calderi* off, it is just *aleuticum* 'Coronation Island'.



## Another writer from our Archives, Alec McCarter

by Theresa McMillan

The other day, I was reading in our Archives on the VRS Website, and found an interesting and beautifully written article from 2005 by Alec McCarter on *tritileias*. They are native bulbs, blooming later in the season, May or June. I had never heard of them or even noticed them in my



spring walks.

So I looked triteleia up online, and found many pictures of them, many by an earlier name, brodiaea or "Fool's Onion".

Just as Alec wrote, these plants would make a fine addition to our gardens. We make a native plant garden, a useful area to consider when warmer and drier summers are due.

Finding sources for native plants can be challenging. Some local nurseries carry them. One example is red currant bushes. Members of the garden club, VIRAGS, sometimes bring in plants like star flowers or trillium to meetings. The Horticulture Centre of the Pacific and Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary sell native plants. They can also be ordered on line and paid for by credit card at Fraser's Thimble Farms on Saltspring Island.



## In Praise of Tritelleia

by Alec McCarter

The time of year is mid-June. At the feet of shrubs at the edge of oak forests protecting the southern edge of Finnerty Gardens or in grassy fields where the ground is wet in spring, here and there are patches of white flowers, white tufts



**Triteleia hyacinthina**

held aloft by wiry, bare, slender stems. A visit to Mount Tolmie will reward the searcher with views of these graceful denizens of the damp pockets in the shrubs and grasses throughout the park, places in full sun that will dry out until autumn rains

come again. After the flowers are borne, the grassy leaves come to nourish the white bulbs at their base. Then the leaves too die down to wait for spring. This widespread native plant of the lily family is found in suitable locations from California to Vancouver Island.

Thrusting up through the low branches of shrubs and supported by the grasses, the stems are so slender that they remain unseen from a distance, and the umbels of wide-spaced, star-shaped, white flowers, float and wave in the soft breeze as if they were free and not tethered to the



courtesy of Lambley Nursery, UK

**Brodiaea elegans**

ground. In a stronger wind, the leaves of the trees, clattering and chattering, applaud the dancing tutus of *Brodiaea hyacinthina* or Fool's onion,



**Triteleia hyacinthina**

now named *Triteleia hyacinthina*. There are other Brodiaeas to be found too. Of them, the elegant blue *B. elegans* is probably the finest. True blue with a deeper blue midrib, it is not as common as its cousin. We have a small patch of this native





**Iris ensata**

species that has persisted for nearly a quarter of a century in a sunny dry position in our garden.

It has not spread, unlike *T. hyacinthine*, which came into our garden years ago, unbidden and unrecognized for what it was. It grew so vigorously that its grass-like leaves, very thickly growing, smothered plants that we tried to establish in the same ground. We dug up and removed handfuls of the small white bulbs from deep in the ground; it seemed that there were indeed bucketfuls of them, but fortunately, the plants seemed to prosper even more through being disturbed and redistributed.



**Saxifrage 'London Pride'**

Now, in mid-June, there are patches of them under rhododendrons, near blue-blooming *Iris ensata*, wherever the soil is damp. There are a few under *R. 'Letty Edwards'* blowing backward and forward, bobbing and weaving, swooping around



**Brachglottis (Senecio) laxifolia**

in graceful circles, driven by the wind, the long, strong, wiry, bare stems (up to 70 cm high but only 2 or 3 mm in diameter), unseen except on close examination. Each floret of the six to twenty in



**Lychnis chalconica**

the umbel is star-shaped, white; each of the six petals having a pale-blue or pale-green central rib. The florets are on long pedicels making the umbels as small as a two-dollar coin or as large as the palm of my hand.

Our opinion of this plant has changed from being one of regarding it as a weed, unwanted as English blue-bells are not wanted where they are not

intentionally planted. Now we regard the plant as a great asset in the garden lending elegance and grace, if only for a relatively short time in June. There is a large patch of them embracing one margin of the pool at the base of the massive rock, growing up among, and towering over, the Lady's mantle (*Alchemilla mollis*), *Saxifrage* London Pride', and multicolored leaves of *Ajuga* that also grow there. Gone are my former, foolish attempts to eliminate it.

As a cut flower, it is quite long lasting. A bouquet consisting mostly of brilliant-yellow, grey-leaved *Senecio laxifolia*, with six or seven dark, scarlet-flowered *Lychnis chalcedonica*, was enhanced enormously by a few of the slender stems of *Triteleia hyacinthine*.

It is said that aboriginal peoples used the starchy bulbs for food. We have not tried to eat it – perhaps that would be an adventure. We are glad just to admire it and its happy nature.

(Reprinted from the July 2004 issue of the *Finnerty Gardens newsletter*).



## Water Gardens by Paul de Greeff

1. Fisherman's Wharf Park Rain Garden (City of Victoria): at the corner of Erie Street and St. Lawrence Street
2. 2950 Selkirk Building on the Gorge (City of Victoria): at the end of Jutland Road
3. Yarrow Place Rain Garden off Craigflower Road (Esquimalt)
4. Reliable Controls Headquarters on the corner of Hallowell Road and Outlook Place (View Royal)
5. Rainbow Hill Development off Rainbow Street (Saanich)
6. 1717 Carnegie Crescent (my home in Saanich)

## REPORT FROM THE BOARD

### Up to date news...

1. All committee reports were received and approved.
2. Still waiting approval from the Mary Winspear Center for the go ahead with the legacy garden project.
3. Plant sale at the Marquardt's home 10 am. – 2 pm. on Saturday, April 30, cash and credit. A volunteer list will be available for helping at this event at the April meeting.
4. Mary Winspear Centre Rhododendron Show and Display, Friday May 6 and 7, trusses to arrive between 4-7 pm, new vases available at the site, committee in place for set up 3 pm.
5. Take down, afternoon of Sunday May 8, committee in place, take down 4 pm.
6. Monday, May 9 "The 4 'T's' Meeting".....Trusses, Tallies, Tea and Timbits." members to bring trusses to the meeting ready to be placed in water filled vases, attending members and guests to judge, entries to be determined by the trophies that have been returned, up to 3 entries per category, help in placing trusses available
7. Ian Duncan is exploring opportunities for open gardens for 2016
8. Categories for Members' Rhodo Show – May 9
  - Best Vancouver Island hybrid
  - Best fragrant
  - Best lepidote in container
  - Best companion plant
  - Best species truss or spray
  - Best hybrid
  - Best novice
  - Best Northwest hybrid
  - High aggregate
  - Best in show










**Reminder:** The **deadline** for submissions for May's Newsletter will be April 20", for June's Newsletter, May 20. There is no Newsletter in July.





## Upcoming Events

2016	Event	Place	Fee
Apr 8-9	<a href="#">VIRAGS Annual Spring Show and Sale</a>	Cadboro Bay United Church	By Donation
Apr 11 7:30	General Meeting with guest Gordon MacKay The Two Georges: Plant Introductions of George Forrest & George Sheriff	Garth Homer Centre	
Apr 11-13	Skagit Tulip Festival via <a href="#">Wells Gray Tours</a> <a href="mailto:Victoria@wellsgraytours.com">Victoria@wellsgraytours.com</a> or 888-595-7889 	WA, USA 	Registration 
Apr 18 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	Lloyd Gilmore 2080 Ludlow Rd Sooke	
Apr 20-24	ARS Convention <a href="http://www.arsasaconvention2016.org/hotel/">http://www.arsasaconvention2016.org/hotel/</a>	Williamsburg, Virginia	Registration
Apr 30 TBA	Plant Sale Unique and rare find rhododendrons	4640 Cordova Bay Rd	
Apr 30 10-12	Evelyn Weesjes' Plant Sale Wide selection of shrubs, rhododendrons, and ferns	10629 Derrick Rd	
May 6-7	VRS Rhododendron Flower Show Mary Winspear Centre <b>Members may bring as many trusses as you like between 4-7 pm for setup</b> 	Mary Winspear Centre 2243 Beacon Ave W Sidney	
May 9 <b>6:00</b>	Members' Rhododendron Flower Show at the General Meeting <b>====&gt; Bring your trusses – max 3 per category &lt;====</b> 	Garth Homer Centre	
May 15-18	<a href="#">Canadian Botanical Association Annual Meeting</a> Contact: Patrick von Aderkas <a href="mailto:pvonader@uvic.ca">pvonader@uvic.ca</a> <a href="http://www.uvic.ca/cba2016/">http://www.uvic.ca/cba2016/</a>	University of Victoria	Registration
May 16 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA	
May 22 9-12	Plant a Holics Sale at Abkhazi Gardens Wide Selection tropical, perennial, ferns etc.	1964 Fairfield Rd	
Jun 13 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA	
Jun 26 NOON	Sunday BBQ Location: TBA	TBA	
Sep 12 7:30	General Meeting TBA	Garth Homer Centre	
Sep 19 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA	
Oct 3 7:30	General Meeting TBA	Garth Homer Centre	
Nov 1	<b>Photos due</b> <b>Final Day to submit photos for Photography Night at the November 14 General Meeting</b>		
Nov 14 7:30	General Meeting - Photography Night	Garth Homer Centre	
Nov 21 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA	
Dec 12 6:30	Potluck Dinner	Garth Homer Centre	